

REMARKS

Re-examination and allowance of the present application is respectfully requested.

Initially, Applicants thank the Examiner for indicating that claims 12-21 are allowable, and further, for indicating that dependent claims 2, 5, 11 and 24 contain allowable subject matter and that these claims would be allowable if they are amended to be placed into independent form.

In this regard, Applicants wish to clarify the record with respect to the basis for the patentability of claims in the present application. While Applicants do not disagree with the Examiner's indication that certain identified features are not disclosed by the references, Applicants further wish to clarify that the claims in the present application recite a combination of features, and the basis for patentability of these claims is based on the totality of the features recited therein.

The Examiner objects to claims 6 and 16, noting that these claims contain a minor informality. Applicants thank the Examiner for noting the informality, and herewith amend claims 6 and 16, paying particular attention to the concern raised by the Examiner. Further, Applicants have reviewed the remaining pending claims to ensure that they are presented in a proper form. In view of the amendments made herein, Applicants submit that the ground for the objection to claims 6 and 16 no longer exist, and respectfully request withdrawal of this ground of objection.

As indicated above, the Examiner indicated in the last Office Action that claims 2, 5, 11 and 24 contain allowable subject matter, and that these claims would be allowable if they are amended to be placed into independent form. In order to advance the

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prosecution of the present application, Applicants herewith amend claim 1 to include substantially all the limitations of objected dependent claim 5. Similarly, Applicants herewith amend claim 22 to include substantially all the limitations of objected claim 24. Accordingly, Applicants submit that the ground for the 35 U.S.C. §102(b) and 35 U.S.C. §103 rejections set forth by the Examiner no longer exist, and that claims 1-4, 6-11, 22 and 23 are in condition for allowance. In this regard, the present amendment of the claims should not be taken as an acquiescence of the appropriateness of the rejection, but as a desire to advance the present application to issue. Further, Applicants expressly reserve the right to submit similar type claims in another application. The Examiner is respectfully requested to withdraw the 35 U.S.C. §102(b) and 35 U.S.C. §103 rejections, and to indicate the allowability of claims 1-4, 6-11, 22 and 24 in the next official communication.

Further, in view of the present amendment, Applicants submit that it is no longer necessary to discuss the appropriateness of the 35 U.S.C. §102(b) rejection of claims 1, 3, 4, 7, 9, 10, 22 and 23, and the 35 U.S.C. §103 rejection of claims 6 and 8, set forth by the Examiner.

As noted above, the Examiner indicated the allowability of claims 12-21. While reviewing the claims, Applicants noted certain minor informalities therein, and have amended claims 12, 13, and 22 to address these informalities. Applicants submit that these amendments do not affect the scope and/or patentability of the previously allowed claims. The Examiner is respectfully requested to re-confirm the allowability of claims 12-21 in the next official communication.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

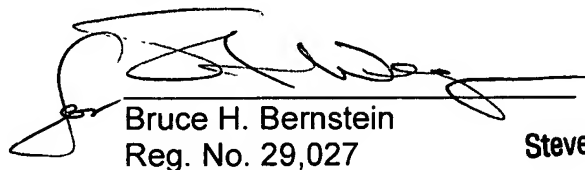
In view of the fact that none of the art of record, whether considered alone or in combination, discloses or suggests the present invention as now defined by the pending claims, and in further view of the above amendments and remarks, reconsideration of the Examiner's action and allowance of the present application are respectfully requested and are believed to be appropriate.

Any amendments to the claims which have been made in this amendment, and which have not been specifically noted to overcome a rejection based upon the prior art, should be considered to have been made for a purpose unrelated to patentability, and no estoppel should be deemed to attach thereto.

Should the Commissioner determine that an extension of time is required in order to render this response timely and/or complete, a formal request for an extension of time, under 37 C.F.R. §1.136(a), is herewith made in an amount equal to the time period required to render this response timely and/or complete. The Commissioner is authorized to charge any required extension of time fee under 37 C.F.R. §1.17 to Deposit Account No. 19-0089.

If there should be any questions concerning this application, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,
Norio SATO et al.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bruce H. Bernstein", is written over a horizontal line.

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